

reduce production costs, promote new job opportunities, and ensure safe and healthy working conditions.

As we pause to reflect on the contributions of America's workers, we should remember those who seek a job—who seek a piece of

the American Dream—and rededicate ourselves to making that dream possible for all Americans to achieve.

Best wishes to all for a memorable holiday.

BILL CLINTON

Interview With Tabitha Soren of MTV August 30, 1996

Ms. Soren. Welcome, Mr. President, to our Choose or Lose bus.

The President. Thank you.

Antidrug Efforts

Ms. Soren. Thank you very much for taking the time to do this on your bus tour.

In your speech last night you said that drugs were wrong and deadly. But on MTV a couple of years ago, someone asked you if you could inhale—if you could do it over again, would you inhale, and you said, “Yeah, I tried the first time.”

The President. That was true.

Ms. Soren. Do you wish that you had answered differently? Because Republicans are planning on using this to attack you.

The President. Oh, they're using it, but all I said was—I was just trying to make the point that I had never—when I answered the question I told the truth. I just told the truth about the question.

Ms. Soren. It was a joke?

The President. Yes.

Ms. Soren. The question was, in context, it was a light-hearted—

The President. It was a light-hearted question, and it wasn't in the context of some sort of endorsement of drug use, and they know that. If you look at the record I established as Governor, the record I've established as President, the things I've worked on, and if you look at the terrible price my own family has paid and my brother's problem which literally nearly killed him, I think that my position on this is clear.

I'm very concerned about it really because every so often, you know, years go by and we see drug use going down. We still see drug use going down among adults; that's the interesting thing. In the last 4 years, drug use among

people 18 to 34 has gone down because people have begun to think more about their own lives, their responsibilities then when they have children, and they began to be concerned about the risks.

But every few years, apparently, younger people believe it's not dangerous anymore and believe that the risks, if there are any, can be borne. The risks of, let's say, cocaine, heroin, and hallucinogens and marijuana are different kinds of risks, but there are real risks associated with all of them. And I'm very hopeful, now that General McCaffrey has come on and agreed to be our drug czar and we're focusing now—I wouldn't say exclusively but clearly primarily on people under 18, that we and people around the country will be able to do something about this.

Democratic National Convention

Ms. Soren. I wanted to ask you another question about the convention. I think a lot of people were confused by what they saw at both conventions; they saw singing Senators and delegates macarena-ing. Obviously it's a party, you know, but many people didn't hear the message coming from the conventions.

For instance, obviously Christopher Reeve has done a lot of good for people who suffer from his disability, but why is his disability an argument to vote for you?

The President. For two reasons. One is, Christopher Reeve made an impassioned plea for research. In my budget we have consistently invested more in research, both in health care areas like spinal cord disease, breast cancer, HIV, and AIDS, and also in science and technology. We're now building with IBM a computer, a supercomputer that will do more calculations in a second than a person with a hand-held calculator could do in 30,000 years—30,000

years. It's unbelievable. And I believe that it's very important to vote for a President who believes in the future and who is really committed to science and technology and research.

The second reason is, as Christopher Reeve so eloquently told me when we were visiting in the Oval Office, not everyone who gets a serious injury and becomes disabled is wealthy; most people aren't, and even wealthy people can quickly be bankrupted by the cost of care. The Medicaid program which the Federal Government has maintained for 30 years contains a guarantee of aid to families with disabilities who are middle class or below, to enable them to maintain a middle class life, to keep their jobs, and still give their disabled family member some help.

In the budget—which I vetoed—of the Republican Congress, which Senator Dole and Mr. Gingrich led through Congress, they would have removed that guarantee, just sent some money to the States, put a lid on it, and then let the States decide what to do. And I think it's highly likely that the first people to be sacrificed would have been people with disabilities.

So those are the two reasons that his being there embodied the human connection to the President and his actions, the Congress, and what happens to people's lives. And every other person that was there on Monday night, the same thing. The Brady bill, it was obvious because they talked about it. Mike Robbins, the Chicago police officer, was riddled with bullets by an assault weapon. The young AmeriCorps girl was important because the Republicans have tried to abolish AmeriCorps twice. The educator is important because they wanted to cut back on educational aid; I wanted to invest more money in education. So everybody there—the Toledo autoworker was important because we've opened new markets to Japan and other parts in the world and America is number one in auto production again.

So we started our convention in a very different way. We had a whole series of citizens speaking to establish the connection between their vote and their lives.

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Ms. Soren. Speaking of Senator Dole and the Republicans, the Republicans are accusing you of theft of their values agenda, stealing their ideas and making them your own. How do you plead?

The President. Well, the Republicans tried for years to convince the American people that only one party had values. And unfortunately—I believe it was unfortunate—they were too often rewarded for that. But I never believed that only Republicans could stand up for the American family. I never believed that only Republicans could be tough on crime. I thought those were American issues.

But if we were going to argue that they belonged to one party or another—I mean, here's a fact: The first bill I signed was the Family and Medical Leave Act. My predecessor, my Republican predecessor, vetoed it twice, and Senator Dole led the fight against it. Now, who is the more pro-family?

I fought the crime bill through, which put 100,000 police on the street, banned assault weapons, and had tougher punishment programs and prevention programs for young people. The bitterest, I mean really, literally, bitterest opponent of the crime bill in the entire Congress was Senator Dole. Now, who is strong against crime? We've got 4 years of declining crime.

So I didn't steal their values. On welfare reform, long before they ever passed a bill, 3 months into my Presidency I granted the first waiver to a State to try a welfare-to-work experiment. We now have 1.8 million fewer people on welfare than we did the day I took office—before this welfare bill takes effect.

So I didn't steal their values agenda. I believe they're American values, and I did something about it. And I think they're angry because they made so many votes for years just by talking about it and not doing anything about it. So we did something about it, and they're complaining about it.

Ms. Soren. Are you afraid of being seen as sort of—are you afraid of your politics being perceived as sort of Republican-like, a less radical approach to their ideas?

The President. No. Let me just take one other example.

Ms. Soren. The only reason I ask is because people are wondering if you're the same person they elected in '92.

The President. If you look at what we talked about at the convention, if you look at what we've done over the last 4 years—including in the last 2 years—the budget that I passed, I put the Democrats on the side of deficit reduction and balancing the budget, because I believe that. That's what I ran on. But all the Repub-

licans voted against our budget because it also made the Tax Code fairer. It lowered taxes on 15 million working people, asked those of us in the highest income groups, the top one percent of us, to pay a little more.

They opposed me on family and medical leave, most of them did. They opposed my education reforms, all progressive things. They opposed the crime bill. Then when we finally got some action out of this last Congress, there was—the health care reform proposal was a big part of my health care reform bill that I signed. The minimum wage bill, the pension relief for small businesses, was legislation that I always advocated. So I think it sounds good. But what was the biggest thing I did in the last 2 years? I vetoed their budget.

So I don't see how they can say I'm Republican-like. I just think that they like saying, "We're for a balanced budget; the Democrats are big spenders. We're tough on crime; the Democrats are weak on crime. We're for work instead of welfare; the Democrats are for welfare instead of work." And even some of our own commentators kind of got hung up in that.

If we protect children and we give families the right to and the tools they need to make the most of their own lives, we should be for a balanced budget, a growing economy, work instead of welfare, and tough on crime. So I feel very good about it, and I don't think it's inconsistent.

Political Consultant Dick Morris

Ms. Soren. Dick Morris helped you make a political comeback over the last 2 years, and he's been running, according to just about everyone, a phenomenal campaign. Now he's resigned. Will you still be talking to him on the phone about politics?

The President. I don't plan to do that, no. But we do have a good team, and we all work together.

Ms. Soren. You're not worried at all with him not being there?

The President. No, because we have a good team. And everybody had a role to play, and we all agreed early on on a strategy. And then when we—we had a decisionmaking process which I think is very good, which I'm just going to keep in place. I'm going to keep the team I've got. I'm going to keep the decisionmaking process in place. And I think we'll do very well.

Ms. Soren. So you won't be communicating with him anymore?

The President. I don't have any plans to do that. I don't say I won't communicate with him. My wife and I and the Vice President all called him and just had a purely personal conversation.

But this campaign is now the product of a record we have made and the proposals we have out there and the fact that we—our administration stood against what Mr. Gingrich and Mr. Dole tried to do in '95 and early '96. And those will be the salient elements that the American people will have to decide on, and we'll do the best we can. But I feel good about it.

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Ms. Soren. There's talk in Republican circles of renewing character attacks on you because of their opinion that you surround yourself with questionable people. How are you going to respond?

The President. I'm not. I'm going to keep doing my job. I think the reason that talk is there, though, is that way they don't have to talk about over 10 million new jobs; they don't have to talk about the fact that my Democratic administration is the first one to reduce the deficit in all 4 of its years, since before the Civil War; that our budget would be in surplus today if it weren't for the interest we pay on the debt run up in the 12 years of the Republican Presidencies before me; that we have made college loans more available and more affordable, and they tried to cut back on it; that the crime rate has come down under our strategy, and they opposed it. They don't have to talk about those things, but I'm going to talk about what is right for the American people.

The American people will make their judgments about—and probably already have made their judgments about that. And I do not intend to respond in kind. I'm going to keep saying what I said before: I like Senator Dole. I've had a good relationship with him. I honor the 35 years he gave this country in Congress, and I respect him for the way he fought back from his injury in the war. And I just don't think that it's good for America, and I'm going to try to make this election about big things that touch the people we just saw on the side of the road there.

Ms. Soren. Or little things that touch them, too.

The President. And the little things that touch them.

Ms. Soren. You captured the imagination of young people in 1992, along with their votes. I saw young people at the MTV Inaugural Ball weeping when you arrived. Maybe their expectations were too high, but even with national service and all your educational programs, a lot of them feel just as disconnected today as they did 4 years ago. Do you feel like you've let people down? Have you not gotten your message out as clearly as you could have?

The President. Well, I think the campaign will help. But all I can say is—

Ms. Soren. Were their expectations too high?

The President. I don't know, because I don't know what their expectations were. I want them to be high. But if you look at what happened on this train trip, that was my first real—I don't think polls can tell you these things. I don't think you can poll this. But when we were out there, and on this train trip we stopped—most of our rallies were in very small towns. We only had 2 stops where there were fewer than 10,000 people there. There were more than 150,000 total people who came to our rallies in those 3 days on the train. And then there were hundreds and hundreds of people, place after place after place, just on the side of the road as we were going. We had 30,000 in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, today, our first bus stop.

I think people do feel connected. Look, I think they feel like they're part of something bigger than themselves. I think they think the country is moving again. I do believe in the first 2 years that—one of the things that I've learned over many years is that there is a time lag between when a President or a Governor or a Congress takes an action and when it can be felt in the lives of the American people. So that we saw real economic growth coming from 1993 on, but there was no evidence until really about 8 months ago that the American people were beginning to feel it in their own lives, when paychecks finally started to go up again, when people saw that there were enough new jobs to make a difference in the local economy.

It's the same thing with education. Now we're beginning—we've got a critical mass of young people who have been either in national service or even many, many more are getting the new college loans, the direct loans that they can pay back as a percentage of their income. We've

reduced the welfare rolls by enough now that people are beginning to perceive it. The crime rate has come down now 4 years in a row so that people are finally beginning to perceive it. Their streets are safer, even though the crime rate in America is far too high still.

I think that's a part of it. And so I think that my obligation is to go back to the young people of America and say, here's what I said I'd do 4 years ago; here's what we've done; here's what we're going to do in the next 4 years. And that's a lot of what we tried to do at our convention.

Campaign Financing

Ms. Soren. Young people are alienated from politics. Young people think politics is rigged by money, and they're right. Democrats received tens of millions of dollars in corporate contributions. What are those corporations getting for their money?

The President. Well, I think it's fair to say that most of the corporations that contribute to either party agree with their policies. But keep in mind, almost all the wealthy individuals and some of the corporations that contributed to the Democratic Party are doing so even though their tax bills went up, because only the top 1.2 percent of individuals and corporations with incomes over \$10 million a year had an income tax increase under our tax bill. And a lot of them supported us anyway, first of all because they knew I was right, that to get the deficit down, get interest rates down—they'd all do better with a healthier economy. I don't believe that any of them have supported me for some sort of bad or unseemly reason.

On the other hand, I think it would be better if we had a campaign finance reform system that would enable people in public life to spend less time raising money and to be less dependent on it. But the only way you can do it is to give greater access to the airwaves, to candidates or parties, because it just costs so much to communicate.

Ms. Soren. So it's our fault. [Laughter]

The President. No, no, it's not your fault. No, no, I don't mean it that way.

Ms. Soren. I'm just kidding.

The President. Look, here's a country with a \$1.5 trillion budget, an annual income of over \$6 trillion. So you talk about a party raising and spending \$150 million in a year and a half for an election, it sounds like a lot of money.

Against that, it doesn't sound like so much money. It just costs a lot of money to communicate. The communications costs—not just on television—radio, print, mail, travel, it's very high.

Ms. Soren. Right. Do you think—so corporations aren't getting access? I read a report that they get to sleep in the Lincoln Bedroom once in a while, CEO's or—

The President. Well, the people who sleep in the Lincoln Bedroom are people I personally invite, who have been my friends, and a lot of them have supported me. But I don't think any President has made a habit of inviting his opponents to sleep in the Lincoln Bedroom. I mean, I think you normally invite your supporters.

Ms. Soren. Sure.

The President. But I can say this: There's never been any attempt to raise any money with the promise that you can spend the night in the Lincoln Bedroom. I have invited people who have been helpful to me to spend the night in the Lincoln Bedroom, but it was never a quid pro quo there.

Politics and Personal Attacks

Ms. Soren. No, I'm not trying to imply that.

You're doing really well in the polls, but there's a certain percentage of people who not only don't support you but they seem to actively dislike you. Why do some people dislike you so much? Nobody is—

The President. Well, I think—there's a sign on the side of your bus; it's a quote of Bill Cosby's that I just love. He says, "I don't know the secret of success. But I know the secret of failure is trying to please everybody." And I have always believed that in public life, when you were given an office, you should outline the major challenges and go after them and really try to get something done. And you should enlist the energies of people and try to bring them together and do it.

And I have always had a certain core of people who have opposed me. When I was Governor of my State, I got elected five times and would regularly get nearly two-thirds of the vote. There would always be a core of people who were intensely opposed to my policies.

Ms. Soren. But people didn't necessarily like Reagan's policies, either, but it didn't seem to get as personal. Do you think it has to do with your generation?

The President. Perhaps. And it may be—well, I just don't know. I don't know. It may have more to do with the comparative tactics of the two parties. I have no idea. It may have more to do with the way people are talked about now.

One of the reasons I have tried so hard—especially since the Oklahoma City bombing, which I say had a profound impact on our country and on me—I have really tried hard to bring a sense of civility and decency back into public discourse. I went back and read some of my own speeches in '92, and while they're not rough at all by the standards of today, I thought, well, I want to elevate what I'm saying and how I'm saying it a little more now.

I just think that politics has always been a rough-and-tumble business, and people have always disagreed. And if you go back to the early 1800's, for example, it's a period of real tumult in our country, what was said and done and how much people had it pretty rough. I mean, when Thomas Jefferson was elected President, the John Adams party—because Mr. Adams was trying to hold onto the Presidency—said that he would kill religion in America, he would end godliness among the American people. So we've always had some of this, but I think we need to resist it.

Ms. Soren. I remember a very proud group of your inner circle of friends at the convention 4 years ago walking around boasting FOB pins. How does it make you feel that bad things have happened to those who have helped you get where you are today: Jim Guy Tucker, Vince Foster, Webb Hubbell, even the First Lady?

The President. Well, I feel very badly, obviously, about Vince Foster because he was my longtime friend, and it's always tragic when someone commits suicide. And I do feel that a lot of people were targeted just because they were from Arkansas. Governor Tucker, for example, had—he was my Lieutenant Governor, we had been friends for a long time, but he'd never been part of my political life. But he was targeted, and I feel badly about that. And the country is going to have to evaluate, when this whole thing is over and there will be time for a fair accounting, whether they think it was the right thing to do. And I feel very badly about Hillary and a lot of her staff have been subject to, because it was just pure naked politics from the get-go.

But that's what I'm talking about. That's sort of the way of the cycle. It's the cost of doing business in Washington. I mean, the people——

Ms. Soren. Was that a surprise to you, that it was as harsh as it was?

The President. Well, it's just gotten worse and worse. It's been deteriorating over time. Yes, it surprised me that you could be exonerated from one thing after another and it would never be noticed and then just another set of charges just to keep these going. That bothered me.

But you know, the thing I think is important that I'd ask the American people to look at is that all these folks in our administration sustained all these hits, and we kept producing for the American people. We said, we can't control this, we can't do anything about it; all we can do is get up tomorrow and try to do our job. Why did we come here? We came here to help move the country forward and bring the country together, and that's what we're going to do. And our convention showed how productive our administration had been and our country had been in the last 4 years. And I think the fact that we could do it while having people like Senator D'Amato on us day-in and day-out I think is a tribute to the character and the public devotion of the people in this administration. I'm proud of them.

Ms. Soren. That's what I wanted to ask you. If you can just—try to take this in the way that I mean it, but you've suffered incessant character assassination over the past 4 years. Your family has been maligned. You get up, there's another funeral; you've probably only had a couple hours of sleep that night. Between the funeral, a scandal, another country maybe going to war, why do you want 4 more years? I mean, what are you thinking?

The President. Well, first of all, there's been a lot more good than bad.

Ms. Soren. Really?

The President. Oh, yes. It is the most rewarding thing in the world for a citizen of our country, who loves our country and believes in the

promise of its people, to be President. To look back on the last 4 years and to go out here as I did on the train ride or on this bus trip, and you look into the eyes of people and you go through these crowds, and somebody will say, "I've got a home because of one of your programs"; "I've gotten a job since you were here"; "I'm on one of your college loans"; "I'm an AmeriCorps student"—when you see how the country is changing for the better, it's immensely rewarding.

And in this day and time—you know, as I said, we've had periods like this in our politics before. In the early 1800's, Mr. Jefferson faced many of the same things. When you live in a time which is really rough, with no holds barred, and a lot of people seek personal advantage by what I call the politics of destruction, you have to be always, always, always defining yourself and the quality of your life by what is inside. And you can't confuse who you are and the quality of your own life with whatever is going on in the day-to-day headlines. It's destructive. Otherwise, you shrivel and become little.

The President should always be trying to be bigger than he is and lifting the country up. And you just have to keep putting that out of your mind; you just have to let it go. I can't do anything about anything that happened yesterday or even an hour ago; you just have to let that stuff go and keep trying to lift the country up.

Ms. Soren. Well, thank you very much.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 6:12 p.m. aboard the MTV Choose or Lose bus. In his remarks, the President referred to Gen. Barry R. McCaffrey, USA (Ret.), Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy; actor Christopher Reeve; comedian Bill Cosby; and Jim Guy Tucker, former Arkansas Governor. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks in Cairo, Illinois

August 30, 1996

The President. Thank you.

Audience members. Four more years! Four

more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you. Ladies and gentle-